

about these global financial transactions and associations. It is perfectly legitimate to ask how they could impact the Biden administration's foreign policy. That is especially true as it relates to China, given the extensive links between the Biden family and that country. Let's see if anyone dares to ask questions at the President's first news conference.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. President, on another subject, I want to discuss the national security threats facing our country.

A recent poll showed 45 percent of Americans acknowledge that China is the greatest threat to the United States. A year ago, that percentage was half that number thinking that China was a threat, the greatest threat to the United States.

Frankly, this year, no other nation came close to what they think about China being a threat—not Russia, not North Korea, not Iran. These were all far behind.

Half of Americans believe China is the world's leading economic power. A record 63 percent say that the economic power of China is a critical threat to the United States.

Now, we all know the American people are smart. They are perceiving exactly what is happening with the United States vis-a-vis China or China vis-a-vis the rest of the world. China wants to supplant our country as the greatest nation and the greatest economy in the world, and China will do it if we are blind to that danger.

Everywhere I see the threat of China's rise minimized. On Tuesday, I saw a very curious thing in the declassified "Intelligence Community Assessment of Foreign Threats to the 2020 U.S. Elections." The intelligence community determined that China did not engage in pervasive election meddling but noted that was in part because China saw the risk associated with doing so.

The intelligence community determined that China would not be excited if President Trump had won the 2020 election because he would "challenge China's rise."

The National Intelligence Officer for Cyber Issues, in particular, found that the Government of China wanted former President Trump to be defeated in the general election, preferring "the election of a more predictable member of the establishment instead." And "China took at least some steps to undermine former President Trump's reelection chances, primarily through social media and official public statements and media."

Yet some in the news media read this very same report that I read and declared triumphantly and falsely that there was nothing to fear from China in terms of influencing our elections. It is pretty clear why China would not want a President unafraid to assert American national interests. That means demanding reciprocal trade, secure borders, and a defense policy focused on American national interests.

We all know that China has been playing us for suckers. China continues to try to expand its influence globally, including in international bodies like the World Bank and the World Health Organization. It doesn't seek to play by the rules but to exploit its influence for its own advantage at the expense of the United States and probably any free country because they don't like democracy.

In this same assessment I saw that Iran, another enemy, also wanted to defeat a strong American President and sow division. Many others—Lebanese Hezbollah, the Government of Cuba, and the Maduro Government of Venezuela—they all had the very same idea. They all wanted to defeat President Trump. Only Russia seems to have preferred Trump but just according to that assessment—although I remember reading a year ago during the primaries that Senator BERNIE SANDERS was also a favorite of Russia. He had to have a defensive briefing, meaning Senator SANDERS, because Russia wanted to help his campaign.

Also, remember, it was then-Vice President Biden who first announced the naive and disastrous Obama "reset" appeasement policy toward Russia. This, coming in the wake of Russia's invasion of our ally, Georgia, arguably gave Putin the idea that he could get away with invading Crimea and Ukraine.

Let's also take this moment to recall that when the Obama Justice Department and the FBI saw threats from Russia during the 2016 election, they didn't do what they did for SANDERS. They didn't defensively brief Trump and his team. Instead, do you know where they went? They opened Cross-fire Hurricane and outrageously used briefings to Trump and his associates as intelligence gathering operations, ultimately wasting years of taxpayer money and time.

Abraham Lincoln once said:

America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we lose our freedoms it will be because we have destroyed ourselves from within.

In fact, the goal of what the KGB calls "active measures," like disinformation since Soviet times, has been to pit Americans against each other to cause us to destroy ourselves.

That brings me to another related point. As I see this seat of democracy fortified with walls and barbed wire while the people, the citizens, and the taxpayers are kept out, I can't help but think about where we will go from here.

Yet the Democrats can only speak of destroying the filibuster during these difficult times. When I hear talk of destroying the filibuster—the very tools that force bipartisanship and ensure that those representing all Americans are heard and that America act as one being abolished forever—I am worried. If the slimmest of majorities is about to impose its will on the other half of the country from inside an armed

bunker, the Russians will have achieved their ultimate goal.

We are not our own enemies to be silenced and to be fenced in. We are one Nation, but we must pull together and acknowledge what it means when countries like China and Iran, our enemies and our adversaries, don't want us to put our country's interest first.

FREE SPEECH

Mr. President, then, on my last point, I want to bring up another few remarks on the First Amendment, as I have spoken a couple of times before very recently.

I have come to the floor over the last few weeks to talk about the First Amendment, one of America's most cherished pillars of freedom. Unfortunately, in recent years, we have seen a corrosive culture undermining sacred civic freedoms Americans risk taking for granted. Too often we don't think about the freedoms we have because we were born here.

We can learn a lot from immigrants that come to this country and appreciate Americans for our freedoms. Whenever I go to these citizenship ceremonies we have for immigrants, I always tell them: I wish you would tell—when you hear some American complaining about what is wrong with America, I hope you know from your experience in other lands that you came here for freedom. Remind us of how lucky we are to have what we were born into.

Silencing the free exchange of ideas has infiltrated college campuses and even the American workplace. It has even affected journalism, traditional media, and all across our social media platforms. We all know that not all speech is protected by the First Amendment and, occasionally, we in the United States fall into a discussion about the technical boundaries of the First Amendment when we talk about the meaning and the merits of free speech.

Now, the health of our democracy depends on free speech to foster an informed public, something that I think Thomas Jefferson made very clear. If democracy is going to work, it is going to have to work with an educated public. The rigorous exchange of ideas inform debate on issues affecting our lives and enables individuals to challenge power and also to challenge orthodoxy.

In theory, the institutions of the "fourth estate" should be the staunchest defenders of the First Amendment. I think I said it before, but you can't say it too often—and there is probably a 100 different ways you can say it—but I always like to say that journalists are the police of our constitutional system to make sure that everybody and all follow the rule of law. What they bring to the people of this country about how our government functions makes everything very transparent, and when things are transparent, you have accountability.

So as I think about these things, it has been baffling to watch over the last